

**TESTIMONY OF LISA FONTANO**  
**MARCH 11, 2010**  
**APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE**  
**RE: HARDOUS DUTY WORKERS' COMP**

Good afternoon Chairman Harp, Chairman Geragosian and members of the Appropriations Committee. I am Lisa Fontano, executive board member of Correction Employee's Local 387. (With me is James Zuccalo, executive board member of Correction Employees' Local 391 and Herb Fuhrman of Local 1565.) We are speaking for the 35,000 members of Council 4 AFSCME, in opposition to Governor Rell's attempt to eliminate hazardous duty workers' compensation for correction employees and other law enforcement and hazardous duty employees.

Public servants, who are eligible for hazardous duty workers' comp, can only receive it if they are put out of work through a "line of duty" injury – which means an injury resulting from an assault by a person that they have custodial control over, are attempting to take into custody, or if they are responding to an emergency. They must also be found by a doctor to have zero work capacity. As soon as a person is found to have any work capacity the workers' comp rate drops to the regular 75%. Also, in the case of a correction officer injury it must be an inmate related emergency.

Hazardous duty workers' compensation is simply an attempt to make whole workers who have been injured while risking their lives to keep our state's citizens safe. Governor Rell has been trying to eliminate hazardous duty workers' compensation for years. Now, that the economy is bad she apparently sees an opportunity to deal this setback to state employees who work the most dangerous of jobs. It's almost a little funny. When Governor Rell needs a state police officer to apprehend a robber, a correction officer to quell a riot or a parole officer to take in a violator, she speaks of duty. When we officers need her to safeguard our families when we're injured in the line of duty, she speaks of budgets.

Our understanding of hazardous duty workers' comp is that it was set up so that an officer rushing in to stop a riot or an assault would not be plagued by second thoughts of 'what will happen to my family if I'm injured.' We have been told that it was set up to make us feel as confident as possible that Connecticut is behind us when we have to risk our lives. Eliminating this sends a whole other message.

We believe that it would be better to raise a small amount of income tax from the wealthiest state citizens (who have benefitted from whopping state and federal tax breaks over the past two decades) than take it out of the hides of state employees injured in the line of duty.

Thank you very much. I'd be happy to answer any questions.